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FROM JEWISH PROPHET TO GENTILE GOD. A REPLY TO PROFESSOR O'NEILL.

Maurice Casey.

In a recent book, the published version of the Cadbury lectures which I delivered under the title *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, I proposed a new explanation of the origins and development of New Testament Christology.¹ In an article in this journal, Professor J.C.O'Neill offered a critical assessment of this work, based on a debate which we began at the British New Testament conference in 1992.² The purpose of this article is to respond to his criticisms. To put this response in context, I begin with some comments on my hypothesis, and on the analytical techniques used to form it.

We all agree that Christianity emerged from ancient Judaism. Where do we go for our understanding of Judaism? We agree to go to primary sources from the ancient period. Most of us agree that, in addition to the New Testament, Jewish primary sources are the most important for understanding Jesus and the earliest period of the church. In this book I make a further suggestion: that profound insight into Judaism, and measuring techniques, can be drawn from Jewish scholarship, that is, from Jewish scholars discussing Judaism as it is to-day.³ The main concept is that of identity, which effectively controls our perceptions of everyone and everything. Identity is the central term currently used both by Jewish people to describe themselves, and by scholars investigating Jews.

¹ P.M.Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God. The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (The Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham, 1985-86. Cambridge/Louisville: James Clarke/Westminster/John Knox, 1991). For an account structured on more traditional lines, ending with a defence of this type of theory over against others, P.M.Casey, 'The Development of New Testament Christology', ANRW II.26.5 (forthcoming).

² J.C.O'Neill, 'An Introduction to a Discussion with Dr.Maurice Casey about his Recent Book', IBS 14, 1992, 192-8.

³ Casey, op.cit., esp ch 2, with bibliography at pp.20-21, n.1.

Some of their works analyse Jews who adhere to, or change to, specific forms of Jewish identity, such as Orthodox or Reform Judaism. Others investigate what happens to Jews and Gentiles who are moving in and out of the Jewish sphere. Identity scales are widely used for measuring identity. In this book, I have used an eight point scale: ethnicity, scripture, monotheism, circumcision, sabbath observance, dietary laws, purity laws and major festivals.

The Jesus movement had all eight of these identity factors, for it was located inside Judaism. It ran into severe opposition from scribes and Pharisees, who had an orthodox form of Jewish identity. I use the term 'orthodox' to describe forms of Judaism analogous to forms of orthodox Judaism to-day.⁴ Orthodox Judaism was, and is, concentrated on careful observance of the Torah, with the traditions of the elders and continued expansion of the halakhah, both essential for the application of the Torah to all the details of life. So some orthodox Jews washed their hands before meals, and some prohibited taking Peah on the Sabbath (cf Mk 2.23-28; 7.1-5).⁵ Jesus and his disciples did not wash their hands before meals, and he vigorously defended disciples who did take Peah on the Sabbath. Jesus embodied Judaism from a prophetic perspective.

I turn to Professor O'Neill's first objection.⁶ Informed particularly by the work of De Jonge, I argued that "the messiah" was not a title in Second Temple Judaism, and the term "messiah" or "anointed" on its own was not specific enough to refer to the messianic son of David, nor indeed to any single individual at all.⁷

⁴ For a definition, Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, 17-18.

⁵ For detailed discussion of Mark 2.23-28, P.M. Casey, 'Culture and Historicity: the Plucking of the Grain (Mark 2.23-28)', *NTS* 34, 1988, 1-23.

⁶ I order these objections as convenient for this response. For what I term his first objection, see O'Neill's 'first question', op.cit., 196-7; for the second objection, see his comments on p.194; for the third objection, see his 'second question', pp.197-8.

⁷ Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, 42, citing M. de Jonge, 'The Use of the Word "Anointed" in the Time of Jesus',

Professor O'Neill believes otherwise. He cites four passages, objecting to widespread conjectural emendations in two of them.⁸ The first is CD II,12. This is a difficult passage, and it is not surprising that scholars generally emend משיח to משיח, changing the ך of the mediaeval text to a ך, for in our period, 'it is well known how easily *yod* and *waw* are confused'.⁹ The general context of CD II,12 concerns people, divided into the righteous and the wicked over a massive period of salvation history. If we were to keep the mediaeval text, we might translate the immediate context as follows:

'And in all of them he [sc God] raised him up people called by name, so that a remnant might be left to the land and to fill the face of the world with their seed. And by the hand of his anointed one he made known to them his holy spirit and seers of truth, and by exegesis they established their names [??]. And those whom he hated he led astray' (CD II,11-13).

If we do interpret the text like this, it is extremely difficult to see who is referred to as 'the anointed one'. The teacher of righteousness might make sense, but he is not generally so referred to, and a sudden reference to him hardly fits the general context. Nor is the terminology sufficient to recall a single figure such as Moses or David. It is certainly not a sudden reference to the future Davidic king, and it follows that it cannot be taken as evidence for the expectation of 'the Messiah'. The conventional emendation is much better and makes excellent sense, referring to a long line of anointed figures by whom God revealed himself and his will. Moreover, 4QD^a makes it clear that the text of II,13 is corrupt. Professor O'Neill has not taken proper account of the large number of variant and implausible readings in the extant texts of CD.¹⁰ What would he do

NT 8 1966, 132-48; M. de Jonge, 'The Earliest Christian Use of *Christos*. Some suggestions', *NTS* 32, 1986, 3231-43.

⁸ O'Neill, *op. cit.*, 196.

⁹ S.A. White, 'A Comparison of the "A" and "B" Manuscripts of the Damascus Document', *RQ* 12, 1987, 537-53, at 550.

¹⁰ See the textual apparatus of M. Broshi, *The Damascus Document Reconsidered* (1992).

with CD IX,2, where the mediaeval text has *מבוא*, and 4QD^e has *מבוא*? Would he really keep the readings *בי* at II,6, *הנני* at III,1, and *חוק* at IV,2, so that the 'bosom' instead of the 'boundary' (*חוק*, Mic 7.11) is far removed? We should not treat mediaeval manuscripts as if they were holy writ, with plenary inspiration down to the last jot and tittle.

Similar comments must apply to CD VI,1, where the mediaeval text again has the singular *משיח*, and 6Q15 has a hole at the vital point. If we do follow the mediaeval text, we have a reference to 'the commandments of God given by the hand of Moses and also through his holy anointed one'. In this context, a single anointed figure would have to be Aaron, and cannot possibly be the future Davidic king. The conventional 'emendation' is however more plausible. Moreover, the future expectation of CD is of an anointed priest, 'the anointed one from Aaron and from Israel' (CD XII,23-XIII,1; XIV,19; XIX,10; XX,1). This is part of the varied expectation which I outlined in ch 6 of *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, and it does not fit properly with Professor O'Neill's simple and single figure, whom he calls 'the Messiah'.

Professor O'Neill refers to two passages from the Similitudes of Enoch. The text of this work cannot be emended because it has not survived. We have only the Ge'ez translation, the text of which is the most corrupt document I have worked on. Some people got very excited at the discovery of perhaps our earliest ms, Tana 9, which is as stunningly early as the fifteenth century. Like all Ge'ez mss, it has the 'weeks' of 1 En 91-93 in the wrong order. Only the fragments of the original Aramaic from Cave 4 at Qumran confirm the obvious scholarly conjecture that the authors began with the first 'week' and moved through the weeks in chronological order, ending with the tenth and last week.¹¹ The corrupt text of the Similitudes is evidently not a unified piece. Fortunately, there is no doubt about the reading *masihu* at 1 En 48.10, nor *masihu* at 52.4, and both should go back to an original *משיח*. The context of 48.10 is clear as well. Here the kings of the earth are downcast, following

¹¹ Cf J.T.Milik, *The Books of Enoch. Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (1976) 47-9, 245-69.

the revelation of the name of that son of man (*walda sab'e zeku*, 48.2). Their fault is given at 48.10: they have denied the Lord of Spirits and his Anointed. There should be no doubt as to who the anointed is: in this context he must be 'that son of man', to be identified at the end of this work as Enoch himself. Similar considerations apply to 52.4, if the text is in order. The main figure is the Elect One, clearly referred to at 51.3,5; 52.9, and therefore surely the anointed one. There is no sign of a Davidic king. Once again, therefore, we may not take these passages as evidence of a unified concept of 'the Messiah'. Rather, the position of Enoch as the eschatological judge reflects the great variety of expectation in the Judaism of this period. The two passages referred to by Professor O'Neill show how flexibly the term 'anointed' could be used, and the rest of the Similitudes, with other eschatological parts of 1 Enoch, show that it might not be regarded as a necessary term.

Further, Professor O'Neill thinks we should not play down 'their King, Christ the Lord' at Ps.Sol.17.32. This translation of a translation is extraordinarily Christian. The text cannot be emended because it has not survived. The Greek translation has καὶ βασιλεὺς αὐτῶν χριστὸς κύριος. It is usual to emend κύριος to κυρίου because Jewish texts normally refer to 'the Lord's anointed', this text was transmitted by Christians for centuries before our earliest ms, which cannot be dated before the tenth century, and other errors of this kind are known to have arisen. The other main version, the syriac, has **ܐܠܚܝܬܐܢ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܡܪܝܐ**. We must surely infer an original text **ܐܠܚܝܬܐܢ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܐ**, 'and their king the anointed of the Lord'. Here the term 'anointed' is indeed used of the future Davidic king, but not until he has been discussed for several verses. There is no danger that we might imagine that the Lord's anointed was Aaron or Enoch, let alone Cyrus (Is 45.1). There should be no doubt that **ܡܫܝܚܐ** was occasionally used with reference to the future Davidic king. Equally, however, it was not a fixed title, nor was it specific enough to refer to the future Davidic king, or indeed to any particular person, unless other words were used in the context to make the reference clear. That is satisfied by the mockery of Mark 15.32, which uses the term 'king', but not by Peter's confession or the high priest's

question (Mk 8.29; 14.61), both of which have been framed in terms characteristic of the early church.

We are now in a position to see what is wrong with the first set of questions put by Professor O'Neill.¹² He has read Jewish texts with Christian spectacles, and framed questions from a later Christian perspective. 'If', he asks, 'there was widespread expectation of a redeemer figure... and if Jesus' mockers thought he was a false Messiah, why did not the possibility occur to Jesus and his disciples that he was in fact the true Messiah, the king of Israel?' Because Jewish expectation had not crystallised to this extent, and the dichotomy 'false Messiah' versus 'the true Messiah, the king of Israel' was not culturally available until later. Rather, Jesus' most dedicated opponents used the false charge of claiming to be king because they could persuade Pilate to crucify him on that charge. His disciples did not think he was a king because that was not what he claimed to be, and he was not like one, neither like David nor like Athronges (Jos. B.J.II,60-65; A.J.XVII,278-84). They addressed him as 'rabbi', because he taught them how to be good Jews, and they remained loyal to him because he recreated Judaism from a prophetic perspective. 'Why were Jesus and his disciples so isolated from being deeply affected by the key question that was agitating Jews at the time: When would the Messiah appear, and how would he be recognized when he came?' This question does not occur in Jewish sources of this period, and approximations to it only occurred after expectation had crystallised into a more fixed form, after disasters in which he had not appeared, after a disaster in which Simeon son of Kosiba had been hailed as Messiah by Rabbi Aqiba, and after it was very important that he had not been Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus and his disciples were fully immersed in Judaism of the Second Temple period. There, expectation was very varied. Jesus and his disciples did believe that he was the final messenger sent by God bring Israel back to God before the final establishment of his kingdom: they did believe that he fulfilled the expectation of John the Baptist: they did believe that he fulfilled the scriptures: and they accepted the atoning function of his death. After his death, they believed he had been

vindicated by God who had raised him up, and as they sought to understand their lives and his role, they applied to him a variety of Jewish terms and beliefs, including 'anointed'. An early form is found at Acts 2.36, where his status appears to be dated from his resurrection. Another early speech of Acts has the verb 'to anoint', and quotes the noun from the scriptures (Acts 4.25-6, quoting Ps 2.1-2).

Professor O'Neill's view involves another serious problem, that Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah, indeed he may reasonably be thought, on the basis of the synoptic evidence, not to have mentioned him. Professor O'Neill comments, 'His silence about that matter can perhaps be explained by the law that the Messiah was forbidden to say who he was until the Father made it known.' There was no such law, not even after the fall of Jerusalem, when the term 'Messiah' did crystallize into a title.

On all these grounds, therefore, I do not accept Professor O'Neill's first objection. For his second objection, we must move from the ministry of Jesus to later in the New Testament period. I have proposed a three-stage model of Christological development. In the first stage, the Christian community was Jewish, as the Jesus movement had been. The driving force of Christological development was still the recreation of Jewish identity from a prophetic perspective, with the added need to understand Jesus' death without the coming of the kingdom. In the second stage, Gentiles entered the Christian community in significant numbers, without becoming Jewish. This greatly increased the need for Christological development. The Pauline and deuterio-Pauline epistles belong to stage 2, as do 1 Peter, Hebrews and Revelation. In ch 6, I propose a dynamic model for the development of Jewish figures such as Enoch and Wisdom. This permitted the addition of beliefs and functions to these figures, in accordance with the needs of the community. New items were not necessarily borrowed. Nor were these figures genuinely divinized, not even when beliefs and functions were borrowed from earlier material about God. For example, at Wsd 10-11, the author attributes to Wisdom the major events of salvation history, so that she plays the role given in the OT account to God. She is not however hailed as a goddess, because this would have

violated the boundary marker of Jewish monotheism.¹³ I proposed that the development of New Testament Christology followed the same dynamic model. This is accordingly a generative, rather than a borrowing theory. It allows such items as Paul's interpretation of baptism as dying and, as it were, rising with Christ to be seen in terms of its social functions, including that of legitimating Christian morals. This function could not be produced within Judaism, where morals were already found in the Law. It is sufficient reason for this interpretation of baptism to have been produced: we should not suppose that it was borrowed.

Within this general scheme, I produced a new explanation of how Christians came to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. This builds on existing radical scholarship of the most standard kind. For conventional reasons, I argued that the earliest form of this belief was in Jesus' exaltation to heaven, not in bodily resurrection. I accepted the view that his tomb was not at this stage believed to have been empty, and that this is why it is not mentioned in our earliest sources for belief in his resurrection, 1 Cor 15.3ff and the early speeches of Acts. I sought to make two new contributions to this debate, and thereby to produce a viable theory. Conventional radical scholarship has always lacked a driving force, a powerful reason why the earliest Christians should have believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. My first contribution was to provide one, the embodiment of Jewish identity in the historic ministry of Jesus. I argued that Jesus' recreation of Jewish identity was such a powerful force that, when he was crucified, his disciples could not believe that God had abandoned him, but had to believe rather that God had vindicated him. Conventional radical scholarship has also lacked a mechanism, a means by which the earliest Christians could have believed that Jesus rose from the dead. My main contribution to this was the development of messianic and intermediary figures studied in ch 6. This shows that the Jewish community did add items of belief to many different figures when this satisfied their needs. I argued further that heavenly vindication was one example of this, and

¹³

From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God, 90, cf 92-94, 114-7.

Casey, *From Jewish Prophet*, IBS 16, April 1994.

suggested that this was the cultural nexus of development of the belief that God had indeed vindicated Jesus.

With these two main points added, I clarified the process of development, from belief during the ministry that Jesus would rise from the dead, through the belief that he had risen, to narratives which made clearer and clearer that this was a bodily resurrection which left his tomb empty. In particular, I noted that visions and study of scripture were two major means of verification in the Judaism of the period, and that these were the means by which the earliest Christians came to be sure that he had indeed risen. I also sought to clarify the development of legitimating narratives, which gradually excluded any possibility other than the later belief that Jesus had risen bodily.

Professor O'Neill challenges this.¹⁴ Noting some examples of individuals believed to have survived death, he asks, 'Is there any comparable Jewish statement that God has raised or will raise someone from the dead that does not imply the resurrection of the body?' This question has been phrased with Christian statements too much in mind, and does not lead to examination of Jewish sources in their own right. Early Jewish sources have little to say about the interpretation of sentences like 'God has raised someone from the dead' because extant texts were not written by people whose beliefs could be helpfully expressed like that. Jewish sources do have a great deal to say about survival after death, because this was a significant concern, especially after the martyrdom of people who were killed because they insisted on keeping the covenant.

A significant proportion of extant texts do not treat this matter in terms of the resurrection of the body. For example, Josephus describes the beliefs of the Pharisees as follows: 'They hold a belief that souls have power to survive death, and under the earth there are rewards and punishments for those who have led lives of virtue or wickedness. Some receive eternal punishment, while others pass easily to live again' (A.J. XVIII, 14). This presents belief in the continued existence of the soul, rather than the resurrection of the body. In this, it typifies several passages of Josephus, in which

¹⁴ O'Neill, *op.cit.*, 194.

similar beliefs are attributed to Essenes and others (cf B.J. II,153-8; III,372-8) . None of these passages implies that people who survive death will leave an empty tomb behind. Moreover, we know from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus that Jesus shared such a view. Both the rich man and Lazarus go to their eternal fates at once, and 'it is clear that they have not left their tombs empty. Nor presumably did father Abraham, who was already in the next world with powers to send a messenger from the dead if he wished, a process described as "going from the dead" at Luke 16.30 and "rising from the dead" at 16.31.'¹⁵

This evidence is fundamental in enabling us to understand how the earliest followers of Jesus could believe that God had raised Jesus from the dead, without believing in an empty tomb. To find it, we must ask questions which enable us to understand Jewish beliefs in their own right, not phrase questions in terms of later Christian beliefs, which ensure that our understanding of purely Jewish sources is distorted. The next important factor is the omission of the empty tomb from our earliest sources, 1 Cor 15.3ff and the early speeches of Acts. This is a devastating hole in the standard Christian myth of Christian origins. There were thousands of Jews in Jerusalem when Jesus was executed. Most of them did not believe that God raised him from the dead. His followers, who did, did not point out his empty tomb. Indeed, there is no authentic tradition as to where it was. In that sense, the evidence of the narrative of Acts is more important than the formula in 1 Cor 15.3ff, for Luke had plenty of narrative space to tell us about the empty tomb, if he had had the necessary information. Moreover, if Jesus had been raised from a decent rock-hewn tomb in which no-one had been laid, it is culturally extremely probable that his followers would have venerated the site. Of that there is no early trace either.

Professor O'Neill comments on 1 Cor 15.3ff. He suggests that ἐτάφη, 'he was buried', at 1 Cor 15.4 entails the resurrection of the body, and enquires as to why else it should be used in addition to ἀπέθανεν, 'died'. This misses the main point, that the earliest sources do not mention the empty tomb. Why a given word is used

has to be a matter of conjecture, but it is not difficult to make one here. It was possible to survive crucifixion, especially if one were crucified for only six hours (cf Mk 15.25,34-7). That Jesus was buried functions as further evidence that he was really dead. His burial may have been put in formulae when Jesus was known to have been buried in a common tomb for criminals (cf Acts 13.29), an unsuitable site for pointing to, let alone venerating: be that as it may, that Jesus was buried says nothing about *how* he was believed to have been raised, and the empty tomb remains conspicuously absent from the old formula of 1 Cor 15.3ff.. This short formula also contains what was accepted by Jesus' followers as real early evidence that he was risen, 'according to the scriptures' and the appearances. Once again, Professor O'Neill has read early sources with later Christian spectacles. We should not accept his second objection.

For the third objection, we move to the third of the three stages in my proposed model of Christological development. In stage 2, when there were still many Jews in the Christian communities, Jewish monotheism was a restraining factor which limited Christological development. In the Johannine community, this restraining factor was removed. The community who produced John's Gospel had Gentile self-identification: that is to say, whoever they were, they felt they were not members of an alien group whom they called 'the Jews'. So Thomas could declare 'My Lord and My God' (Jn 20.28), while 'the Jews' sought to stone Jesus for blasphemy, on the ground that he made himself God (Jn 10.31-33, with the preceding discourse, concluding 'I and the Father are one'). People with Gentile self-identification therefore removed what Jewish people felt as a boundary marker of their Jewish identity. Ever since, Gentile Christians have perceived their view of Jesus as within the bounds of monotheism, but the Jewish community has perceived the deity of Jesus as a violation of Jewish monotheism. Hence my title, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*. Professor O'Neill is quite right to stress that I do not think that Gentile Christians believed that they were giving up monotheism, nor do I suggest that Christians are pagans now. This means, however, that the question as to whether Christians were 'still bound by its [i.e. Judaism's] key confession

that the Lord our God is one Lord¹⁶ is a matter of perception rather than reality. Christians generally believe that they were, and are, so bound: many Jews believe that Christians are not so bound, and this belief is already reflected in the polemic of the Fourth Gospel. It is only at the end of the New Testament period, therefore, that the presentation of Jesus as the λόγος, made flesh as Jesus Christ, the Son of God, together with the remarkable delineation of the Paraclete, produced a Godhead with the three figures who foreshadow the later Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Professor O'Neill's third objection begins in the form of a question. 'Why is Dr. Casey so sure that there were not Jews before Jesus who had already come to believe that the Messiah, when he was born, would be the incarnate Son of God who had existed with the spirit, three-in-one from the beginning?'¹⁷ For two reasons. Such belief is not found in Jewish sources, and Jewish sources both before and after the origins of Christianity put forward the Jewish form of monotheism as a boundary marker between the Jewish and Gentile worlds. The so-called two powers heresy should not be used to understand development within Judaism because it was a development which caused removal from Judaism, or marked out separation from it. It does provide a dynamic parallel to the Christology of the Johannine community, which also separated from Judaism. It is also post-Christian, and involves figures such as Metatron or Jesus.

Professor O'Neill suggests that Philo quotes two-power passages, and that it is clear from them that 'the two-power heresy was a trinitarian belief'. This would make the two-power heresy early enough, trinitarian, and not genuinely heretical at this date. We should not however accept Professor O'Neill's exegesis of the passages which he cites, for reasons which I illustrate from the first two passages extant in Greek. *On Abraham* 121 has ὁ ὢν as the scriptural name of the Father of all, as well as αἱ πρεσβύταται καὶ ἐγγυτάτω τοῦ ὄντος δυνάμεις, the eldest powers which are nearest to He Who Is, ἡ μὲν ποιητική, ἡ δ' αὖ βασιλική: the creative power

¹⁶ O'Neill, op.cit., 197.

¹⁷ O'Neill, op.cit., 197.

is called θεός and the kingly power is called κύριος. So the Father has two powers, but this does not make a trinity of three persons, for two reasons. In the first place, these two powers are aspects of God's actions. So at 122, God may appear to the διανοία as one or three: as one when the perception is purified and passes to the basic form which is free from any mixture, but three when a person is not fully initiated and cannot perceive το ὄν without anything else, but only through its actions, creative or ruling. The perception of God as one is the really true perception: the perception of him by means of his creative and kingly powers is a second best way for people who cannot perceive God otherwise. These δυνάμεις permit people to perceive God, transcendent and unknowable from Greek philosophical tradition, vigorously portrayed in Jewish scriptures which tell of an active and knowable God. The discussion at *On the Cherubim* 27-29 is somewhat different. Here we find δύο τὰς ἀνωτάτω εἶναι καὶ πρώτας δυνάμεις, God's highest and chief powers are two, and this time they are ἀγαθότης and ἐξουσία, goodness and authority. They are however similar metaphors, for the διάνοια, contemplating the two cherubim, may consider God's goodness as the power by which he produced everything, and his authority the means by which he rules what he has produced. However, Philo now produces the λόγος as well, so we have more than God and two powers to reckon with.

This takes us to the second reason why we may not suppose that Philo's account is genuinely trinitarian, and it is well illustrated by *On Flight and Finding* 94ff (cf Qu.Ex II,68). Here the θεῖος λόγος the divine Word, described as 'fountain of Wisdom' (97) and 'Image of God' (101), has five δυνάμεις: the first is the ποιητική, called θεός, the second the βασιλική the same two powers as at *On Abraham* 121, the creative and the kingly. The third is ἡ ἰλεως, the gracious power: the fourth is τῆς προστατιούσης ἃ δεῖ the one which commands what is necessary, and the fifth is τῆς ἀπαγορεύσης, ἃ μὴ δεῖ the one which forbids what must not be done, probably described as νομοθετικῆς (95). With this number of powers, it should be clear that Philo is not portraying a Trinity. His sextet is concerned with divine activity rather than essence, and particularly with how God can be perceived by people. God himself

is high above all six, as it were seated in the Chariot and speaking the Word (λόγος), who is the charioteer of the powers (101). Some people are capable of perceiving the Word directly (97), whereas others may perceive God through the powers. We must therefore accept the view of Sandmel: 'a *dynamis* is a clue to what God has done or does, and is not a clue to God's essence... The *dynamis* are attainable to less gifted men in that they enter into the perceptible world, as the Logos does not.'¹⁸

It follows that there is no Trinity in Philo. There is a further problem, that none of these powers is incarnate. For incarnation, Professor O'Neill turns to the Word at *On agriculture* 51. This has the λόγος as firstborn son taking on the government of the universe. Ex 23.20 is quoted, but the λόγος does not change its being or appearance in any sense at all, nor is there any necessary connection between governing the universe and taking on flesh. Philo's λόγος effectively functions as the aspect of God by which people know him. It never becomes incarnate.¹⁹ For incarnation, Professor O'Neill turns finally to 11Q Melchizedek. Here Melchizedek is the central figure, and the quotation of 'return on high' from Ps 7 probably does mean that he previously descended, an inference which corresponds to the rest of our knowledge of Melchizedek. There is however no indication that he was born, or became incarnate in any reasonable sense of that term.²⁰ The herald is the מַבְרָר of Is 52.7 who announces מַלְכֵּךְ אֱלֹהִים, 'your Elohim reigns': it is therefore very probable that the herald is not Melchizedek, but a subordinate figure. 'Messiah of the Spirit' is not a title, not even in the conjectural restoration which Professor O'Neill is probably right to believe in, and which recalls Is 61.1. We must surely refrain from seeing the Christian idea of incarnation here too.

¹⁸ S.Sandmel, 'Philo Judaeus: An Introduction to the Man, his Writings and his Significance', ANRW II.21.1 (1984), 3-46, at 24. Further, L.A.Montes-Peral, *Akatalptos Theos: der unfassbare Gott* (ALGHL 16. 1987), esp 164-81.

¹⁹ For a brief summary, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, 84-5.

²⁰ Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God* 114-7, 166-8.

We can now see what is wrong with Professor O'Neill's second set of questions, his third objection. 'Why is Dr. Casey so sure that there were not Jews before Jesus who had already come to believe that the Messiah, when he was born, would be the incarnate Son of God who had existed with the Spirit, three-in-one from the beginning?' Because I have read Jewish documents in their own right, and noticed that they do not contain Christian beliefs on this doctrinal scale. 'If, as Dr. Casey himself argues, so much of the development of christology, right up to the last Johannine touch, was done according to patterns already well established in Judaism, why should we not suspect that the developments had already taken place before Jesus was born?'²¹ We may suspect this, but careful study of Jewish documents shows that all these developments had not taken place. Secondly, some developments are quite unJewish. These include the dependence of morals on Christian baptism in Romans 6, and, most fundamental of all, the deity of Jesus in the fourth Gospel. The way in which development took place is fundamental for understanding how the development could happen. The non-Jewish, and finally anti-Jewish contents of this development indicate that we should not confuse mode with content. Thirdly, Jewish patterns are not the only ones involved in the deity of Jesus. This step was not taken until the Johannine community took on Gentile self-identification, and this did not happen until a successful Gentile mission had been in progress for some 50 years. At this stage, therefore, Gentile converts familiar with the deification of Heracles and Domitian could perceive in the deity of Jesus a familiar pattern, as well as a passage from myth and propaganda to truth.²²

I am therefore unconvinced by all of Professor O'Neill's objections. Some people may think that they are of a different kind from each other, the first two traditional, the third unusual. I suggest that all three embody an error of method central to this field of study. They distort Judaism by means of Christian tradition.²³ This is not a

²¹ O'Neill, *op.cit.*, 197 and 198.

²² Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God* 37-8, 116-7, 158-9.

²³ Cf. G. Vermes, 'Jewish Studies and New Testament Interpretation', *JJS* 31 (1980), 1-17; G. Vermes, 'Jewish

recent mistake, nor is it merely academic, and we ought to stop it. The deity and incarnation of Jesus are a contradiction of Jewish identity, as Jews have told us for centuries. We should not try to read them into Jewish sources.

In quite a profound sense, therefore, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God* is the opposite of much Christian scholarship. In trying to understand the forms of Judaism in which Christianity started, I have turned to Jewish scholarship, because Jews understand Jews better than Gentiles do, and because Jewish scholarship has evolved techniques for understanding movement in and out of Judaism, which is another obvious feature of early Christianity. In the longer term, therefore, the analytical techniques which I have employed are capable of further refinement and development, with a view to explaining not only the development of early Christology, but the origins of Christianity as a whole.

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Literature and New Testament Exegesis: Reflections on Methodology', *JJS* 33 (1982), 361-76; P.S.Alexander, 'Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament', *ZNW* 74 (1983), 237-46; S.T.Lachs, 'Rabbinic Sources for New Testament Studies - Use and Misuse', *JQR* 74 (1983), 159-73.

HEBREWS IN RECENT SCHOLARSHIP.

J. C. McCullough

In 1980 I published in *Irish Biblical Studies*, an article entitled 'Some Recent Developments in research on the Epistle to the Hebrews'. At that time Hebrews was considered to be the Cinderella of New Testament scholarship. In the nineteen year period from 1960 to 1979, less than 20 commentaries and less than 10 monographs had been written on Hebrews. Since that time, however, there has been a mini revival in interest in Hebrews. In the thirteen year period from 1980 to 1993 some 40 commentaries and almost 40 monographs (not counting dissertations, introductions and books on themes related to Hebrews but not directly on Hebrews) have been produced. Moreover, several of the commentaries run to over 500 pages. The purpose of this article is to review the commentaries, monographs and articles which have appeared since 1980 and to assess what progress has been made, if any, in solving a few of the major problems in Hebrews scholarship.

Author

Discussion about the authorship of Hebrews has in very general terms, gone through three distinct phases. The first phase was concerned with discussion of the question of Pauline authorship; the second with the search for an alternative author; and the third with the creating of a profile of the author, gleaned from the pages of Hebrews itself.

The discussion about whether Paul wrote the Epistle or not seems by and large to have come to a halt, with the conclusion that Paul did not write the Epistle¹, though in 1983 Hagedé² argued that

¹ Probably the last major work arguing for the Pauline authorship was that of William Leonard, *The Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd, 1939) which, in spite of very careful scholarship, still failed to win the day. Cf. for example, in our period the title in Collins, R.F., 1988. Even an article by Robert B. Shaw with the title 'The

the author may be 'un paulien, ou Paul lui-même, selon une solide tradition' (*Italics mine*). The more fruitful discussion, however, as to whether the author belonged to a Pauline school has continued through our period. In 1981, for example, F. Schröger argued that the book could not in any way be described as Pauline.³ The author was an independent interpreter of primitive Christian tradition and any similarity with the thought of Paul ... e.g. his teaching on the pre-existence, humiliation and suffering and death of Christ, or the establishment of a new covenant through his blood could be explained by reference to that primitive tradition, not any direct influence of Paul on the author of *Hebrews*. He listed nine points of dissimilarity between Paul and the author of *Hebrews* to drive home his point. On the other hand, while Strobel also argued that the Epistle was not 'ein Zeugnis des Ringens um die 'Entwicklung des paulinischen Erbes'', he nevertheless considered that the author might belong to the wider environment of the later Pauline missionary work, though he was clearly distinguished from Paul as an independent theological personality.⁴ Sören Ruager in his commentary⁵ went much further and argued that the author worked with Timothy and was a member of the Pauline circle; and right at the end of our period, in 1993, Knut Backhaus⁶ has argued persuasively that the author of *Hebrews* may indeed be said to belong to a Pauline school.

The second phase started when scholars searched the pages of the New Testament and other early Christian literature to discover an alternative author to Paul and many different names were put

Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews', in *Incarnation: Contemporary Writers on the New Testament* ed. Alfred Corn the author states that Paul did not write the Epistle (p. 266).

² Hugedé, 1983 p. 216

³ Schröger, F, 'Der Hebräerbrief -- paulinisch?' in *Kontinuität und Einheit* FS F. Mussner, ed. P. -Galatians. Müller and Werner Strenger (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1981) p. 211-222.

⁴ Strobel, 1981 p. 13f.

⁵ Ruager, 1987

⁶ Backhaus, Knut, 'Der Hebräerbrief und die Paulus-Schule' *BZ* 37 (1993) 183-208 (and literature cited there).

forward⁷. In the 1970's at least one name was added to this long list, that of the mother of Jesus in 1975,⁸ and several old favourites were proposed again. In 1981 R. Jewett⁹ argued that the author was Epaphras and that he had written the Epistle, which is the 'Letter to the Laodiceans' mentioned in Col 4:16, to heretics in the Lycus valley who were angel-worshippers and David Lewis Alan in an unpublished dissertation proposed Luke¹⁰. Such efforts to pinpoint names may be judged largely to have been a failure. If one, however, were absolutely compelled to pick names out of the long list available, the two names of Barnabas and Apollos would be considered to be the most suitable. For example, Strobel argued that the name Apollos is the only one worth considering, but because of lack of documentation he did not go so far as to postulate that name¹¹ and Weiss said the same for Barnabas and Apollos.¹²

The third phase, and we are firmly in that phase now, was to accept the anonymity of the book and most commentators find themselves holding that position. Some scholars accept the anonymity with a certain amount of regret, something they are forced to do because of the paucity of the evidence. For example, Attridge said: 'The beginning of sober exegesis is a recognition of the limits of historical knowledge and those limits preclude positive identification of the author.'¹³ Others, in my view correctly, celebrate that

⁷ cf. Weiss, 1991, p. 61f for a detailed list of suggested authors.

⁸ cf. Ford, Josephine M., 'The Mother of Jesus and the Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *The Univ. of Dayton Review*. 11 (1975) 49-56.

⁹ R. Jewett, 1981. He builds on an article by Charles Anderson, 'Who wrote 'the Epistle from Laodicea'?' *JBL* 85 (1966), 436-440

¹⁰ David Lewis Alan, *An Argument for the Lukan Authorship of Hebrews*, Unpublished Dissertation, the University of Texas at Arlington, 1987.

¹¹ Strobel, 1991 p. 12

¹² cf. Weiss, 1991 p. 62 and Robinson, *Redating*; cf. Ellingworth, 1993 p. 21 'His name is perhaps the least unlikely of the conjectures which have been put forward.'

¹³ Attridge, 1989) p 5

anonymity. Grässer¹⁴, for example, argued that the author is anonymous because he *wants* to be anonymous for good theological reasons, reasons which are given in Hebrews 2:3: 'Hebr. ging aus theologischen Gründen von vornherein in anonymer Gestalt aus'.¹⁵ Following M. Wolter¹⁶ he argued that 'Allein Jesus Christus wird als exklusive personale Autorität und Ursprungsnorm der Tradition reklamiert (2:3)¹⁷ -- hence the personal authority of the author is not emphasised.

Failure to find a name to put to the author of the Epistle has, however, lead scholars in the eighties to enter the third phase of the discussion and to concentrate on the much more productive and interesting task of going back to the book itself to find out what kind of person the author was. In this area there have been several points of agreement and several lines of discussion have been drawn.

The reference to eyewitnesses in 2:3 would certainly suggest that the author was not an eye-witness and that we are dealing with second or third generation Christians. Moreover the use of the male present participle in 11:32 would suggest that, in spite of suggestions to the contrary, the author probably was a male.¹⁸

It is in the area of his educational and philosophical background that most discussion has been generated. Many scholars have pointed to his excellent Greek and his general familiarity with the world of letters of his time. This insight, of course, is not one that was discovered only in the eighties. Already in 1909, Deissmann¹⁹ quoted Origen who had pointed out that the 'linguistic character of the epistle has none of that rudeness of speech which

¹⁴ Grässer, 1990.

¹⁵ Grässer, 1990 p. 22.

¹⁶ cf. Wolter, M., 'Die anonymen Schriften des Neuen Testaments. Annäherungsversuch an ein literarisches Phänomen', *ZNW* 79 (1988), p. 10

¹⁷ Grässer, 1990 p. 17.

¹⁸ cf. Ellingworth 1991, p. vii and Attridge 1989 p. 5.

¹⁹ A. Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East* tr. L. R. M. Strachan (New York: George H. Doran, 1909) p. 70 n 3. The quotation comes from Origen, 'Homil. in Hebr' in Eusebius, *Hist Eccl* vi 25.11

the apostle himself confessed ... that on the contrary the epistle is more Greek in its stylistic structure' and then added himself:

'It [the contrast between Hebrews and the other primitive Christian documents] points to the fact that the Epistle to the Hebrews, with its more definitely artistic language... constituted an epoch in the history of the new religion. Christianity is beginning to lay hands on the instruments of culture; the literary and theological period has begun.'²⁰

Then in 1917 Nairne²¹ suggested that the author belonged to a circle of men who have had a Hellenistic education, a view echoed by Käsemann in 1936.²²

Most commentators and writers on Hebrews in the eighties have echoed this theme, both as regards language and culture. As regards language the author was steeped in the Greek of the Septuagint and in his quotations from the Old Testament there is no evidence that he knew any Hebrew.²³ Moreover, scholars stress the skill with which the author commands his Greek. Übelacker quoted Haering who said that it is the 'stilisch bewussteste Schrift im Neuen

²⁰ Deissmann, 1909, *ibid.* p. 70-71.

²¹ A. Nairne, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. (Cambridge: University Press, 1917) p. 31.

²² Käsemann, E. *Das wandernde Gottesvolk*. Göttingen 1938.(1961).

²³ McCullough, J. C. 'The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews.' *NTStud* 26 (1980) 363-379 and 'Some Recent Developments in research on the Epistle to the Hebrews', Part 1 *IBS* 2 (1980), 141-165; part ii *IBS* 3 (1981), 28-45; Ellingworth 1991 p.x; A. H. Cadwallader. 'The Correction of the Text of Hebrews towards the LXX'. *NovTest* 34 (1992) 257-292 who has categorized the changes in favour of the LXX under the headings of expansions, conflation, corrections and common expressions; A. Hanson 1983 *The Living Utterances of God: the New Testament Exegesis of the Old Testament*. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983) p. 105 points out that of the 38 Old Testament quotations, only 6 do not agree with LXX A or B and 14 agree with the LXX against the Masoretic Text.

Testament'²⁴ and this view is repeated by almost all the commentators.

This command of Greek, however, is only a pointer to the overall educational level of the author. Attridge²⁵ spoke of the author as being well educated, and very much at home in the general cultural milieu of the Graeco-Roman world while Williamson²⁶ agreed that 'the writer of Hebrews drew upon the same wealth of literary vocabulary and moved in the same circles of educated thought as a man like Philo.' Thompson argued

'While the author is not a philosopher, it is undeniable that the book is the work of a skilled rhetorician. The extraordinary vocabulary (140 *hapax legomena*), with a large number of words attested nowhere else in biblical literature but common in secular literature, point out the educational level and rhetorical ability of the author. The word plays, careful syntactical constructions, and well-constructed parallelisms all point to a level of training that was recognised in the ancient church as exceptional.'²⁷

This view is repeated by Erich Grässer in his commentary where he says that the author is an *ανηρ λογιος* (cp. Acts 18:24).. 'der die Regeln der Rhetorik beherrscht und dies mit gewählter Ausdrucksweise vielfach unter Beweis stellt. Der *auctor ad Hebraeos* ist der beste Stilist unter den Schriftstellern des Neuen Testaments.'²⁸

Moreover, J. W. Thompson and D. E. Aune have pointed out that his use of terminology such as *παιδεία*, an important term in the

²⁴ Übelacker, 1989 p. 12.

²⁵ Attridge, 1989 p. 5. Similarly Laub 1988 speaks of 'philosophisch gebildet und überaus schriftkundig ... überdies schreibt er von allen neutestamentlichen Autoren das beste Griechisch' p.18.

²⁶ Williamson, R. *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*. (Leiden: Brill) 1970 p. 296.

²⁷ Thompson 1982 p. 158

²⁸ Grässer, 1990 p. 16

Greek educational system linking education and suffering²⁹ suggests he is at home in that environment.³⁰

While there is general agreement, however, on the fact that the author was an educated man of his time³¹, that he was, as it were, the Philo of the early Christian Church, there is no agreement as to precisely what movement of Greek intellectual thought he belonged to. The discussion as to whether the author was a follower of or was influenced by Philo, Gnosticism or Middle Platonism has continued in the eighties³². First of all we consider Philo.

²⁹ Thompson 1982, p. 17ff and D. E. Aune in 'Heracles and Christ: Heracles imagery in the christology of early Christianity' *Greeks, Romans and Christians: Essays in Honour of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. D. Balch et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) p. 15. He went further, however, and suggested that the myths about Heracles may have played a larger part in the author's thinking than suggested previously: 'the similarities between Heracles imagery and the Christology of Hebrews that have been explored above suggest that many of the important and vital functions attributed to Heracles as a Hellenistic saviour figure were understood by some early Christians as applicable to Jesus to an even greater extent than they were to Heracles' p. 19; cf. too H. W. Attridge, 'Liberating Death's Captives. Reconsideration of an Early Christian Myth.' <*Gnosticism and the early christian world* ed. J. Goehring et al. (Sonoma, Calif: Polebridge Press, 1990) pp. 103-115

³⁰ cf. Section on the genre of the Epistle for a further discussion.

³¹ The author's knowledge of Greek and Hellenistic culture has lead some to argue that he could not have come from Palestine. cf. Isaacs 1992, p. 48 quoting Josephus who in *Ant* 20.264 says that the Jewish masses were less inclined to learn foreign languages than any other nation, (possible this statement was a justification for his own limited knowledge of Greek), she argued that while people from Judaea could get by in Greek, it was not their mother tongue and they did not have the fluency and rhetorical skills in Greek shown by the author of Hebrews.

³² For a very clear and full discussion of the various possible background influences on the author of the Epistle see L. D. Hurst, 1990

Spicq in his great commentary³³ and in later articles³⁴ had argued strongly for a Philonic influence on Hebrews and to prove this, he brought together fifty pages of parallels between the two authors in his commentary. On the basis of these parallels he even went so far as to imagine the author of Hebrews knowing Philo personally and perhaps listening to him in the synagogues of Alexandria.. In a monograph published in 1970 Professor Williamson argued that Spicq was going beyond the evidence. He maintained that while there may be lists of parallel words and expression, these words and expressions are used in completely differently ways in Philo and Hebrews. This view has been echoed by many scholars since then.³⁵ He concluded that while it is *possible* that the author was ‘un Philonien converti au christianisme’ as Spicq suggested, ‘...it is hard for me to believe that the conversion of a Philonist could have resulted in so thorough-going a rejection of Philo’s attitudes, outlook, methods of Scriptural interpretation, and so on.’³⁶

While Williamson had succeeded in refuting some of the claims made by Spicq, he had not, however, settled the issue of the relationship between the author of Hebrews and the kind of thought represented by Philo, because after a decade of debate Spicq’s work has shown that the author at least ‘used the vocabulary of educated Hellenistic Jews’³⁷ (of whom Philo was a very important representative, in fact, due to the scarcity of the material which has survived, almost the only representative) though the verbal parallels do not necessarily show that he used them in the same way as Philo. As Thompson has said:

³³ Spicq, C. *L’Épître aux Hébreux*. 2 volumes (Paris: Garibalda, 1952-53)

³⁴ ‘Le philonisme de l’Épître aux Hébreux.’ *RB* 56 (1949) 542-572; 57 (1950) 212-242

³⁵ cf. Isaacs. 1992 p. 55. ‘Only someone who has not read Philo at first hand would miss the difference in ‘feel’ between him and the author of Hebrews’.

³⁶ Williamson, R. *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*. (Leiden: Brill) 1970 p. 579.

³⁷ Thompson 1982 p. 8.

Even if Spicq has claimed too much, the extensive parallels which he has demonstrated for Philo and Hebrews suggest the importance of Philo for understanding the presuppositions of Hebrews³⁸.

This view had been found already in Dey in 1975 when he had argued that Philo was the principal point of comparison with the author of the Epistle³⁹ and has been echoed by many scholars during the eighties. Sören Ruager, for example, in his commentary pointed out that the author was not a pupil of Philo but was at home in the Hellenistic culture of which Philo is an important representative.⁴⁰ This being the case, the important question is how the author uses the traditions which he has in common with Philo, as Thompson correctly pointed out when he argued that

An analysis of the intellectual presuppositions of the author necessitates that one distinguish between tradition and redaction more carefully than has been done in previous scholarship. It is likely that the author of Hebrews employed various traditions which he reshaped for the needs of his audience. Thus a particular parallel may only show the tradition which the author was using.⁴¹

There is, therefore, a growing consensus that the author was acquainted with the 'intellectual presuppositions' which were part and parcel of the educated Hellenistic world, and as such shared by Philo, and which can be roughly categorised as Middle Platonic.

³⁸ Thompson 1982, p. 8

³⁹ Dey, Lala K.K., *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews*: (Missoula, MT; Scholars Press, 1975)

⁴⁰ Ruager 1987; cf. too Strobel 1991 p. 9 who says he is 'close to Philo'; and A. N. Chester, 'Hebrews: the final sacrifice' *Sacrifice and Redemption Durham Essays in theology*, ed. S. Sykes (Cambridge: CUP, 1990) pp. 57-72. who finds that the links with Philo (and Qumran) are explained by the common first century milieu.

⁴¹ Thompson, 1982 p. 12

Some scholars, however, want to be more specific and see in the author signs of what later developed into full blown gnosticism. This possibility was mentioned by Windisch in his commentary in 1931⁴² but, of course, it was Käsemann who did so much to champion that cause,⁴³ arguing that the gnostic myth of the redeemed redeemer united the themes of pilgrimage, cult and priesthood so prominent in Hebrews. For all the skill with which the case was presented, it has not continued to enjoy a very large following. The main advocate of this view at the present day is Professor Eric Grässer⁴⁴ who has argued that the Nag Hammadi discoveries strengthened Käsemann's argument. rather than weakened it ⁴⁵ and in his recent commentary has continued to argue for a gnostic background.⁴⁶ He cited Albert Schweitzer with approval when he said that the purpose of the book is to counter Gnosticism with Christian gnosticism. Where other New Testament writers 'nur durch das Beharrungsvermögen wirkten' the author of Hebrews *attacked*

⁴² Windisch, H. *Der Hebräerbrief* 2nd ed. HNT 14 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1931).

⁴³ Käsemann, E., *Das wandernde Gottesvolk*. Göttingen 1938. (reprinted 1961); tr. as *The wandering people of God. An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*. tr. R. A. Harrisville and I. L. Sandberg. (Minneapolis: Augsburg), 1984).

⁴⁴ Gert Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief*. Studien zum N.T. Band 2. Gütersloh: Mohn, 1969) has also argued that the author's view of creation was closer to gnosticism than to apocalyptic (121), but he also felt that many other themes could have come from other sources.

⁴⁵ Grässer, E., 'Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963'. *Theol. Rundschau*. N.F. 30. 1964. p. 185; published again in *Aufbruch und Verheissung* pp.48. 'der Wert der Nag Hammadi-Schriften liegt in der Bestätigung dessen, was wir aus den Paulinen, den Past., Joh und Hb schon wissen: nämlich die Indienstnahme eines allen schon vorgegebenen gnostischen Mythos as Interpretament für das Heilserignis in Christus'. He then went on to list of themes such as the way, pilgrimage, heavenly journey, rest, perfection etc.

⁴⁶ Grässer 1990 p. 27.

false gnosticism which included false teaching about angels and a false attitude to the Old Testament.

However, though writing at the beginning of the decade Thompson in a sense summed up the conclusions at the end of it: 'The attempt to account for the categories and themes of Hebrews against the background of Gnostic presuppositions has not succeeded, despite the valuable contributions of Käsemann, Grässer and Theissen.'⁴⁷ He argued, as well, though that. .. 'the positive contributions of these interpreters has been in recognising a pattern of argumentation which distinguishes Hebrews from other NT writers.' The problem for scholars, however, is that, given the paucity of our knowledge of Hellenistic thought in the first century, and our lack of knowledge of where the Epistle was written, it is very difficult to be specific about what strands of thought were influenced by what movement.

In the eighties, however, scholars as well as arguing for the Hellenistic background of the author, have also defended his Jewishness.

Earlier scholars such as Michel⁴⁸, Barrett⁴⁹, Michel⁵⁰, Klappert⁵¹ and Hofius⁵² and, though in a difference context,

⁴⁷ Thompson 1982 p. 5.

⁴⁸ O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*. 13th. Ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) who spoke of the 'intellectual sphere of the hellenistic synagogue.'

⁴⁹ Barrett, C.K., 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews' in *Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: CUP, 1956) pp. 363-393.

⁵⁰ Michel, O. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*. 13th. Ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975)

⁵¹ Klappert, B. *Die Eschatologie des Hebräerbriefes*. (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969).

⁵² Hofius, O., *Der Vorhang vor dem Throne Gottes. Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräerbrief* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972) and *Katapausis Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1970).

Williamson⁵³ had insisted on a strong Jewish, eschatological, element in the epistle. This insistence on the Jewish character of the book has been echoed in writings in the eighties. Thus Thompson, who argued very strongly for the Greek philosophical flavour of the book nevertheless agreed that the author inherited Jewish eschatological tradition, though he would want to argue that the way he handled those traditions is different from the way other New Testament writers handled them. A very similar viewpoint is found in Strobel's commentary.⁵⁴ Horbury⁵⁵ followed by A. N. Chester⁵⁶, has developed a very interesting theory that the author was not only a Jew but was in touch with **living** issues of Judaism particularly in relation to the priesthood in first century Judaism. Horbury suggested that 'the antecedents of the priestly thought characteristic of Hebrews should be sought neither in Christianity, nor in sectarian or visionary Judaism, but in the pervasive influence upon Jewry of the Pentateuchal theocracy.'⁵⁷ Clearly the question of Jewish influence on the author is bound up with the question of the Jewishness or otherwise of the recipients and it is to this question we now turn.⁵⁸

⁵³ Williamson 1970 p. 579-580)

⁵⁴ Strobel 1991 p. 15. 'Sie setzt die universale Hoffnung des rabbinischen und apokalyptischen Judentums fort, nun aber in der Neugestalt der gesamtchristlichen Eschatologie.' cf. too Rowland, C. *The Open Heaven* (SPCK, London, 1982) for the view that Jewish apocalyptic tradition lies behind the Epistle.

⁵⁵ Horbury, W. 'The Aaronic Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews', *Journ StudNewTest.* 19 (1983), 43-71.

⁵⁶ Chester, A N, 'Hebrews: the final sacrifice' *Sacrifice and Redemption Durham Essays in theology* ed. S. Sykes (Cambridge: CUP, 1990) pp. 57-72.

⁵⁷ Horbury, 1983 p. 68.

⁵⁸ The question of the author's links with Qumran or Merkabah mysticism has not arisen in the eighties (though cf Rissi in note 63 p. 78) and so will be omitted from this short survey.

Recipients

Braun, Grässer, Laub, März⁵⁹ and Hegermann⁶⁰ have argued strongly against the view that the recipients were Jewish Christians. Grässer and Weiss believed that the letter was written, not to a particular community but to the church as a whole. He argued that the recipients are 'Christen, ohne Rücksicht auf ihre Herkunft'⁶¹ and Laub and Braun based their argument partly at least on the evidence of the list of Hebrews 6:2.⁶² Most scholars in the eighties, however, have argued or assumed that the recipients were Jewish Christians⁶³ or have been undecided on the issue⁶⁴.

It is when we come to the question as to why the author was writing to his audience and where they were living, in other words what was the *Sitz im Leben* that gave rise to the Epistle that we find the greatest differences of opinions.

As regards where the epistle was written to many scholars writing in the eighties found themselves unable to come to a decision e.g. Bénétreau⁶⁵, Erich Grässer⁶⁶, Weiss⁶⁷ etc., and those who did

⁵⁹ März 1989 p. 19 'Man wird von daher die Adr nicht als speziell judenchristlich geprägte Gruppierung werten dürfen, sonder als eine Gemeinschaft, in der die Ermüdungserscheinungen der nachapostolischen Zeit mit besonderer Schärfe zutage treten.'

⁶⁰ Hegermann, 1988 p. 10 'Aber der Hebr ist weder an Juden noch an Judenchristen geschrieben, sondern an Heidenchristen'.

⁶¹ E. Grässer (1990) p. 24; cf. Weiss 1991 p.71 for a similar quotation.

⁶² Laub 1988 p. 18 and Braun 1984 p.2.

⁶³ Hagner 1990, Kistemaker 1984 p. 17, Casey 1980, p. xii, Morris, 1983 p. 12, Rissi 1987 (on p. 11 he suggested they may previously have been priests or Essenes), Bénétreau 1989 p. 19, Toussaint, S. D. 'The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews.' *Grace TheolJourn.* 3 (1982), 67-80, Bruce 1990, Ellingworth 1993 p. 27 'a predominantly but not exclusively Jewish-Christian group.'

⁶⁴ Attridge 1989 p.12f, Strobel 1991 p. 10f but on p. 16 he suggested that the work itself is Hellenistic Jewish Christian, Vanhoye 1989 p.2,

⁶⁵ Bénétreau 1989, vol. I. p. 23.

make a decision, acknowledged the tentative nature of that decision. It is fairly clear from Hebrews 13:24, however, that the epistle is involved in some way or other with Italy⁶⁸. However, scholars are divided as to whether they think the Epistle was written from Italy or to Italy. A few scholars thought that the Epistle was written in Rome, and so tells us nothing about the destination of the Epistle⁶⁹. Rome, however, is very unlikely as Raymond Brown has pointed out⁷⁰ for two reasons: firstly, if the author was greeting a community outside Rome and was being joined in this greetings by members of his own community (13:22) then we would expect him to say 'Those from Rome greet you', not those from Italy. Secondly, and more importantly, if Hebrews came from Rome, then we would expect it to reflect Roman views, whereas, as Brown shows, just the opposite is true. Many more scholars, therefore, think, on the balance of probability, that the letter was written to Rome e.g. Hagner⁷¹, Attridge⁷², Bruce⁷³, Wilson⁷⁴, Rissi⁷⁵, Weiss⁷⁶. This argument has

⁶⁶ Erich Grässer 1990. p.22; he allowed for the possibility that it could have been written in Rome.

⁶⁷ Weiss, 1991 p. 76.

⁶⁸ Übelacker 1989 p. 12

⁶⁹ cf. For example, in an earlier period W. F. Howard, 'The Epistle to the Hebrews'. *Interpretation*, 5 (1951) 84-86. (He thought it was written from Rome to Ephesus.) and A. Ehrhardt, *The Framework of the New Testament Stories*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1964. (He thought it was sent from Rome to Jerusalem to comfort Christians there on the Fall of Jerusalem)

⁷⁰ Brown, 1983 p. 147

⁷¹ Hagner 1990. Hagner stressed the tentative nature of any estimate concerning date, provenance and destination of the Epistle.

⁷² Attridge 1989 p. 9-10.

⁷³ Bruce 1990 p.

⁷⁴ Wilson 1987 p. 14

⁷⁵ Rissi 1987 p. 11. He thought the recipients were Jewish Christians located in Rome but separated from the main church there.

⁷⁶ Weiss 1991 p. 76

been developed by Raymond Brown⁷⁷. He has proposed two main reasons for accepting a Roman destination for the Epistle: firstly the fact that Hebrews was known at a very early date by Roman authorities such as Clement of Rome, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Commentaries of Hippolytus and the presbyter Gaius; secondly, the fact of Rome's reluctance to include the Epistle in the Canon. This was because they knew it was not written by the Apostle Paul and so did not meet the criterion for acceptance. On the evidence that is available at the moment, if one had to chose, Rome would probably be the best choice.

The question as to why the author wrote the Epistle has been answered in many different ways in our period. Some scholars see the problem which arose in the Christian community as a general one, a 'faith crisis', as Laub puts it⁷⁸ usually associated with a delay in the Parousia and the general lassitude which is characteristic of second and third generation Christians who face a tension between eschatological hope and the actual course of history with its pressures for the faithful.⁷⁹ William Lane argued that the recipients had already suffered under Claudius in Rome and were now facing danger again, with the result that they were tempted to grow lax in their commitment to the Christian message.⁸⁰

Many scholars, however, would be more specific in the identification of the crisis in the Epistle, linking it more directly with the relationship between the Christian community and Judaism.

⁷⁷ Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, 1983 p. 142-151.

⁷⁸ Laub 1988 p. 3f.

⁷⁹ Weiss 1991 p 73. 'In diesem Sinne ist auch der Hebr Dokument für das Problem der "Parusieverzögerung" im Sinne des Problems der "sich dehnenden Zeit"'; cf. too Strobel 1991 who thought that the crisis lay in the delay of the Parousia. The author does not give a new meaning to it (like Paul and the Synoptics), but 'mit lebhafter Naherwartung reagiert und der angeschriebenen Gemeinde die Notwendigkeit der Ausdauer einschärft'. p. 15.

⁸⁰ Lane 1991 vol. 1. P.lvi. Cp Kistemaker p. 16 who thought that they were in a time of sustained peace and had relaxed spiritually.

Some see the trigger for the problem to be the general suffering and persecution which Christians had endured and their natural desire to avoid this suffering by reverting to Judaism. In 1972, for example, Buchanan had argued that they were Jewish Christians who had lived in the diaspora but who had returned to Jerusalem to await the establishment of the reign of God. They were a very strict communal monastic sect, very similar to the Qumran community and had given up their goods — hence the author says in Heb.10:34: ‘For you had compassion on the prisoners, and you joyfully accepted the loss⁸¹ of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one..’ Now, however, they were losing hope and perhaps considering taking part in the Day of Atonement ceremonies as a means thereby of effecting the coming of the Kingdom. In the meantime they were beginning to resent the relinquishing of their private property when they joined the community. Robinson gave a new twist to the theory of Christians reluctant to face persecution, when he postulated that they were rich Jewish Christian businessmen who had their lives so changed by the Neronian persecution that they were tempted to revert to a *religio licita* (10: 32-34; 12:4; 13:3, 12-14). Guthrie⁸² also thought that they were Jewish Christians in Rome, who were in danger of falling into some kind of apostasy to Judaism.⁸³ and Schmithals⁸⁴ argued that they were living in the period after the Fall of Jerusalem when they were deprived of the official protection given to Jews by the Romans. They had to be encouraged in their vulnerability.

⁸¹ ἀρπαγὴν is a stronger word than ‘loss’, and denotes ‘unlawful robbery’. Hence Buchanan’s theory is weakened at this point.

⁸² Guthrie 1990 p. 38

⁸³ cf. R. E. Glaze, ‘Introduction to Hebrews.’ *Theological Educator* 32 (1985) 20-37 who argued that it was written to a congregation of Jewish Christians at Rome in the late 60’s, who were tempted to seek security from imperial persecution by reverting to Judaism which had the status of a legal religion. The purpose of the Epistle was to get the recipients to leave the synagogue and make a complete break with Judaism.

⁸⁴ W. Schmithals, *Neues Testament und Gnosis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, 1984) p. 138-144

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CHURCH GOVERNMENT

*Rev. Paul Fleming**

Most of us belong to a particular Christian church because we were born into families who were members of that church. Some remain members of the church of their birth without giving it too much thought, but many remain because, in the process of maturing, they have found in their church a true avenue for growth in faith and experience of God. Some have left the church of their birth and joined other churches in the belief that the other church can best facilitate their journey in faith—they find its structures and organisation more appealing. All too often, however, the question of structure in the churches has been a source of polemics and division—thus negating the primary purpose of the structure which was to lead to the growth of the Church of Christ.

Here we are concerned with looking at the structures of government in the Catholic Church—how they came about and how they function today. We need to remind ourselves at the outset that structures in any organisation or society must not be an end in themselves—they are at the service of the organisation or society. In the context of the Church their primary purpose must be to facilitate those who share an interest in Jesus and to facilitate association with others who share this interest.¹

“Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam •” These words from Matthew 16:18 adorn the cupola of St Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Many Catholics see in these words a clear indication that Jesus installed Peter as head of his Church on earth (the role today described as ‘Pope’) and that Peter, along with the

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¹ Enda Lyons, *Partnership in Parish* (Columba Press, 1987) pp 6-9.

other Apostles, was given the task of governing the Church. This authority was passed on from generation to generation, and is still the basic structure of government in the Catholic Church.

Through the centuries there has been much discussion about what these words actually mean. There are objections that this may not even be a genuine saying of Jesus—nowhere else in the Gospels does Jesus speak of founding a church. There are objections that, even if Jesus did say this, Peter never in fact enjoyed any such primacy in the early Church—one such instance is the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 where it is James who presides over the meeting. Of course where there are arguments in favour of one position there will always be counter arguments, and some argue that Peter's primacy is seen both in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles: Peter is seen as one of the 'inner-circle' of disciples; Peter features prominently in the discovery of the empty tomb and in the post-resurrection appearances; Peter plays a key role on Pentecost Sunday; and he is the initial one who silences the critics concerning the mission to the Gentiles.

Whether we accept or reject these arguments and counter-arguments, we are still faced with the fact that the evangelist, Matthew, included in his Gospel the saying "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church •" We are also faced with the fact that the Catholic Church has a structure of government wherein the role of the Pope is of central importance. It is unhelpful, especially in the context of ecumenical dialogue, to read the developed papacy back into the New Testament era; it is helpful to try to understand how the present structures came about and the value they have in fulfilling the task given by Jesus to his first followers.

The Missionary Church

After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, and the Pentecost event, the Church was essentially missionary in character—the primary task was to spread the message of Jesus. Subsequent to this came the necessity for the development of structures which would preserve the apostolic heritage. This is seen especially in the two letters to Timothy and the letter to Titus, commonly called the Pastorals. While it is generally accepted that it is difficult to

attribute these letters in their present form to Paul himself, it is fair to say that they are dealing with a situation which was inevitable—the necessity for individuals to take on leadership roles and responsibility in the churches which Paul had founded. This was a situation which Paul had dealt with in his own life-time—Acts 20:17 shows Paul summoning the elders of the Church in Ephesus, and the letter to the Philippians is addressed to “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops (or overseers) and deacons.”

In both the Pastorals and Acts we see these individuals referred to by the title of *presbyteros* and *episkopos*. It is an oversimplification to see the *presbyteros* coming from the Jewish tradition and the *episkopos* coming from the Gentile tradition.² It is also difficult to determine any distinction between the two titles—in Acts 20:17ff all the *presbyteroi* are referred to as *episkopoi*. What we do get from the Acts and the Pastorals, however, are indications of what their functions are to be—they are to be the official teachers of the community, safe-guarding the faith they have inherited and rejecting false teachings (Acts 20:28-31) and also to care for and administer the Church as they would their own family (1 Timothy 3:5).

Individual Responsibility—the Episkopos

Eventually, however, the two titles came to be distinguished. There was a move from a group of people having responsibility to the practice of an individual holding responsibility—and this individual was known as the *episkopos*. When did this take place? If we accept the traditional dating for the letters of Ignatius of Antioch—that they were written during the reign of Trajan, i.e. before 117—then we can say that by the early years of the second century the three-fold hierarchy of one bishop, a group of presbyters and a number of deacons was established in Syria and parts of Asia Minor. By the third quarter of the second century it would seem that every church (with the exception of Alexandria) had a single bishop.

² See Raymond Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*.

Along with this development we have the practice of the local bishop being the one who presided at the celebration of the eucharist. As numbers increased, this role was delegated to one of the presbyters. But the importance of the role of the bishop in the eucharist was still maintained with the custom, in the early centuries, of bringing a portion of the eucharistic bread consecrated by the bishop to the eucharist being presided over by the presbyter.

Divine Institution or Human Institution?

Was this development of structures part of Jesus' plan for his Church? Some would argue that it was a purely natural development, based on a human need for structures and organisation. This, in itself, does not negate the idea that it could be part of Jesus' plan. Very few Catholic scholars would argue that the present structures in the Catholic Church are not partly the product of historical development. But we are still faced with the fact that Jesus gave a charge to the apostles to preach to all nations, and that this charge was to continue to the end of this age. Therefore, while in many respects the original apostles could have no successors because their personal experience of Jesus was unique and untransmissible, their pastoral ministry was to continue—this was the will of Jesus—and this implied the appointment of successors. This is seen to be done in the New Testament.

Another aspect worth considering here is the role of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised to send the Spirit to “guide you into all the truth” (Jn 16:13). If we accept that Jesus sent the Spirit, and that this Spirit was active in guiding the early Church in its discernment of the inspired texts to be included in the New Testament and in its discernment of the Christological and theological implications of the life and work of Jesus, can we not also argue that this same Spirit was active in guiding the early Church as it developed structures to facilitate the charge given by Jesus to his apostles?

This is the understanding of the Catholic Church, and this is why the Second Vatican Council in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church can talk of the bishops as successors of the apostles: “This sacred synod, following in the steps of the First Vatican Council, teaches and declares with it that Jesus Christ, the eternal

pastor, set up the holy Church by entrusting the apostles with the mission as he himself had been sent by the Father (cf Jn 20:21). He willed that their successors, the bishops namely, should be the shepherds in his Church until the end of the world. In order that the episcopate itself, however, might be one and undivided he put Peter at the head of the other apostles, and in him he set up a lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity both of faith and of communion”.³

The Second Vatican Council

The chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church which deals with the hierarchy in the Church comes after the chapters which deal with the Mystery of the Church and the Church as the People of God, and situates the role of the hierarchy as one of service to the Church and its members. This brings us back to a point made at the beginning of this paper that structures must not be an end in themselves—they must be at the service of the organisation in which they are found. No one could deny that, at times in the Church’s history, this ideal of service has not always been as obvious as it should have been—matters secular often impinged on matters sacred. But in the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church makes a genuine attempt to highlight the role of service and describes the bishops as “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God”.⁴

Bishops have the task of being “teachers of doctrine, ministers of sacred worship, and holders of office in government”⁵—teaching, sanctifying and governing. Each bishop has this responsibility for his own diocese, but when he is ordained to this task he also becomes a member of what is called the episcopal college where he acts in communion with all the other bishops, thus keeping his own local church in the communion of all the churches—which together form the Catholic Church. In this episcopal college the Pope is seen as first among the bishops. This

³ *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, #18

⁴ *ibid*, #21

⁵ *ibid*, #20

is because he, as bishop of Rome, is seen as successor of Peter who himself is understood to have had a position of primacy among the first group chosen by Jesus to continue his mission.

This solidarity among the bishops is for the good of the universal church. This is seen in a very real way when the bishops gather together in council to teach authoritatively (such as at the Second Vatican Council). But it is also evident when bishops dispersed throughout the world or gathered together in local areas teach authoritatively concerning matters of faith and morals. The purpose of such teaching is to spread the message of Christ and help build up the Kingdom of God.

Of course this is not something which is entrusted solely to the bishops. All members of the Church are called to share in this task. The Second Vatican Council tried to correct an imbalance whereby the role of the clergy was seen as active and the role of the laity was seen as passive. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church states “• the faithful who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.”⁶ All share in the priestly office of Christ by offering their worship and their lives to the Father; all share in the prophetic office by witnessing to what is taught; all share in the kingly office by commitment to service of God and service of our fellow human beings.

The documents of Vatican II, and documents issued since then, emphasise the common call to ministry in the Church. In many areas this has been well received and great progress has been made. In other areas there has been confusion about the relationships of ordained and non-ordained ministries. “The Church” is still seen by many as the hierarchy and the clerics, and the enthusiasm felt by many after Vatican II has been replaced by frustration because of the apparent lack of implementation. In a world where change is so rapid many people long for the security and stability of established structures. The ideals of Vatican II are still valid; the implementation of them will take time. There is an

increasing awareness in the Church of a need for structures which will facilitate greater participation of all members and at the same time preserve what is worthwhile in the Church's long tradition. This can be a difficult balance to achieve, and the inherent problems are common to many Christian churches.

St Paul, writing to the church in Corinth, uses the image of the body. Here he highlights how the body has different organs, each performing its own function yet co-operating in harmony. The problems St Paul faced in the first century are maybe not that different from our problems today. In truthfulness to the mission given to us by Christ, each church must continually look at its structures and its function in the world and ask itself if this is the most efficient way to spread the message and build up the Kingdom of God.

P Fleming

The Metaphor of God Incarnate, John Hick, SCM Press, 1993, pp.ix-x + 180, £9.95.

Seventeen years ago, in 1977, a group of leading academics produced a book with radical views on the nature of the incarnation. The book was titled *The Myth of God Incarnate* and evoked a storm of Christological debate within Britain. The Christological debate has moved on to other areas including of Liberation, Feminism, and Jewish Christologies since then. However, in this new book *The Metaphor of God Incarnate*, Hick wishes to return to the incarnational debate.

Hick's aim in the book is six fold:

- (1) that Jesus himself did not teach what was to become the orthodox Christian understanding of him;
- (2) that the dogma of Jesus' two natures... has proved to be inexplicable in any satisfactory way;
- (3) that historically the traditional dogma has been used to justify great human evils;
- (4) that the idea of divine incarnation is better understood as metaphorical than as literal...
- (5) that we can rightly take Jesus... as our Lord...
- (6) that a non traditional Christianity... can see itself as one among a number of different human responses to the ultimate transcendent Reality that we call God... (p.ix)

For anyone familiar with Hick's work since the seventies these themes will be familiar. However, in this book he presents a new summary of his universal faith. Hick takes as his starting point the search for the historical Jesus. Hick suggests that Jesus was a human wholly open to the divine. It was the Church which created the theological problems found in the concept of Christ. It is through Hypostatic Union and Kenosis that Hick demolishes the traditional idea of incarnation.

Citing Aquinas as his authority, Hick proceeds to posit the notion of multiple incarnations. Christianity thus becomes engaged in a search for shared religious pluralism and salvation becomes a world wide process of Liberation and equality. Jesus becomes our

personal guru and guide who enables us to relate to the benign transcendent Reality [sic] which is the ground of everything.

This book addresses current thought on Hypostatic Union and Kenosis and demands discussion of these issues. Hick's commitment to interfaith dialogue is clearly signalled but lacks strong convincing argument in this book. However, the book is readable and thought provoking and an welcome summary of much that has occupied Hick in the last years.

D J Templeton

